Better Homes and Centers

Michigan Department of
Social Services
Division of
Child Day Care Licensing

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Guiding and Guarding
Children

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

By Barbara Ditzhazy, Program Director
Preventive Services for Families, DSS

Rebecca P. is a statistic. She is a client of Preventive Services for Families, (PSF) a program of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

In the corner of her living room piled halfway up the wall is a stack of toys, a trike, and whatever else is needed to make the three-year-old blue eyes of son Matthew happy. They usually are.

It all seems very far from government programs and statistics.

But Rebecca, 33, has a strong opinion about PSF, and about what would happen if it did not exist. "More women would lose their children," she said quietly. "I'm sure I would have lost him (Matthew, her son), a year ago if it hadn't been for this program." "Mothers have somebody to talk to in PSF", Rebecca said. "Without that, in some circumstances, there would probably be more child abuse," Rebecca said.

PSF helped Rebecca cope with the pressures of raising Matthew, who as an asthmatic was frequently hospitalized. The long days spent at the hospital were emotionally and physically exhausting for her. Ironically, after she left the hospital with Matthew, her worry and exhaustion often surfaced in the form of abuse. "I needed space and time for me," Rebecca said. "And being here 24 hours a day I just didn't have that." "Through it all, PSF was always available."

It wasn't always so. After almost 2 years of planning and testing in nine counties, the Preventive Services for Families Project (DSS) was initiated in June 1981. A staff of about 100 was able to serve approximately 60% of the 5,000 referrals received in 1984.

PSF handles both pre and post-abuse cases and provides services, regardless of income, to families at risk of child abuse or neglect. Signs of risk include social isolation, parental drug and alcohol abuse, emotional problems in the parents, family conflict, lack of affection between the parents and the child, unrealistic expectation of parents for the child, and long term illnesses or unemployment of the parents.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The Department of Social Services recognizes the need for preventive services to protect children from abuse and neglect. These services reach out to adult family members who may be experiencing physical and/or emotional overloads from the everyday demands of life. It is a major concern for all of us to identify signs of stress early. Such awareness can lead to prompt intervention and the reduction of child abuse.

The Preventive Services for Families Program (PSF), administered by the Department, is described elsewhere in this newsletter. Its purpose is to give the necessary help to parents to cope with sometimes overwhelming pressures.

What I would like to emphasize is that you as child care providers are an extension of the family. You are in a position to observe changes in a child's behavior. You can also note changes in a child's health, dress and personal hygiene. Changes in parental behavior may also be significant.

You as a child care provider may identify the early signs of a family breakdown through your daily interaction with the child and his parents. In these situations I would encourage you to talk with the child's parent(s) about your concerns and observations. If you are not comfortable doing that, call the Department of Social Services and discuss the situation with a PSF worker. Together you may be able to think of ways to approach the family to get the help they may need.

Ted deWolf

Ted deWolf, Director
Division of Child Day Care Licensing

PSF depends on the voluntary involvement of parents in the program. It's not uncommon for an initial interview to take three hours as a client responds to the listening ear of the PSF caseworker and the effects of her own personal isolation.

The tedious process of working through client resistance to the heart of personal problems often requires 18 or more months. Decisions to conclude prevention services are jointly made by the client and the caseworker when the family has shown significant improvement.

The program can generate dramatic change in clients. Eighty percent of PSF cases are closed with the family no longer at risk. And only 3.7 percent of the PSF cases closed with goals achieved experienced later child mistreatment. Prior to PSF, the rate was as high as 18 percent.

The PSF caseworker works closely with clients to help them understand what values and attitudes prevent them from functioning adequately as parents. Generally, high-risk parents cannot believe anyone would or could help them. The PSF caseworker is the key to helping these parents assess their own resources and to reach out and use other available sources.

The many problems facing these families require a variety of helpers. The PSF caseworker is only one of many. Parent aides, homemakers and especially child care providers are among essential helpers.

All these helpers must work together closely if high-risk families are to be identified early and provided the necessary help to enable them to care for and protect their children from harm.

For information about availability of this service in your area, contact your local DSS office.

"I'm sorry but I cannot let you take Johnny: His father has written that Johnny is not to be released to his mother."

DON'T LET GO UNTIL YOU KNOW

By Michael Hall, Consultant
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The media have recently devoted considerable attention to an ever increasing problem in this country—child-napping. Child care centers and day care homes are among the potential locations for such abductions. However, there are some basic precautions that can be taken to safeguard the children you have in care.

The Department of Social Services provides centers and homes with Child Information Cards. These cards enable providers to obtain accurate information about a child and his legal guardians. They also serve as an opening for discussion with parents about the child's safety.

If both parents are not named in the "Name of Parents" section, the provider should ask the registering parent if the unnamed parent may pick up the child. Careful explanation of how this directly relates to his child's safety will usually gain parent cooperation in answering the question. If the absent parent may have access to the child, the provider should make an appointment to meet the parent at least once so both parents are known by sight.

For those instances in which the custodial parent does not want the non-custodial parent to pick up the child, the provider should request a written statement that the child is not to be released to that parent. If there is a court order restricting the non-custodial parent's access to the child, it is helpful to keep a copy of the order on file.

If the non-custodial parent attempts to take the child from the center and the custodial parent has not given permission, the provider should not release the child. If the non-custodial parent attempts to use force, the custodial parent should be notified immediately. The amount of resistance to the non-custodial parent requires judgment on the part of the provider. Contacting the police is not appropriate if there is no court order on file.

However, in cases where there is a court order on file, the police should always be called. The provider should contact local police or county sheriff, not the Michigan State Police.

Many difficult situations can be avoided by careful interview with parents when enrolling a child. Enlist the parent's cooperation in protecting their child. Assure them of your concern in providing a safe environment for their child as well as for the others you have in care. And finally, ongoing contact with the parents is important to assure continuous protection of the child.

ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION

By Jean Westlund, R.N.
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Adult-child interaction in a day care home or center is a quality issue in child care today. All parents want someone to love their children, to stimulate their growth and development, and provide for their physical, emotional, social, and mental needs. The final wish is that the adult supplying daily care not replace the parents in the child's affections. It is a tall order and a seemingly impossible one. Yet there are some things we can do to come closer to meeting these goals.

Liking children and enjoying being with them enriches and improves the quality of everything the caregiver does. Children need to feel loved as individuals named "Suzy" or "Jason". Adults need to be able to zero in and to talk to the youngsters in ways that encourage a response from the child. This involves some active listening.

With a tiny baby, mild stimulation by the caregiver during quiet, alert periods is vitally important to the young one's normal development. Because these youngest ones sleep a lot, the stimulation you give may be all they get. In addition to providing talk, laughs, hugs, a few safe toys and little lullabies, it will be valuable to share the need for this stimulation with the parents so they can have some of the fun, too. You cannot spoil a child by supplying these crucial needs. Smiles, patty-cake, peek-a-boo, nursery rhymes, and songs are all suitable. Do not wake a sleeping baby for amusement or try to play with a hungry one who is crying and just wants to be fed.

In addition to stimulation, even young ones need some awake time alone to strengthen muscles for creeping and walking, and to learn to roll over and discover hands and feet as playthings. Don't try to discourage sucking fingers or thumbs. Some small children get much satisfaction from sucking and seem to need more than others. When children are ready, they will give it up.

Greet toddlers by name; tell them your name as a matter of courtesy. Smile and assist in removing coats that cannot yet do themselves.

Encourage new skills and doing-by-myself so that a child can take pride in achievements, competence and increasing independence. It will take more time, but development always does.

The caregiver can structure the play areas so discipline problems are reduced. This is true in home environments, as well as in larger preschool settings. Active play areas should be apart from the quieter activities like puzzles, picture books, stringing beads, or coloring and finger painting.

Weather permitting, outdoor activities should be a part of each day. Even short periods outside clear the air for both adults and children. Active use of young muscles lets children know what their bodies are capable of doing, offers emotionally healthy outlets in running, yelling, climbing, and all the other motions which challenge whole body involvement.

One thing I like to see is a developing sense on the part of the caregiver on when to intervene and when to observe in the play areas (indoors and out). Timing of intervention is an art and a skill. Sensing when the play is about to become too boisterous or destructive and redirecting can save tears and discomfort for everyone. Children feel safer when they know someone will stop them before they go too far.

Another adult interaction which may not be readily apparent is a reasonably structured routine so children who attend regularly come to know what happens next. The youngsters are less anxious and tend to be more cooperative when they know the routine and the rules.

Adults need to feel respect for individual needs and differences of both parents and children. Careful observation can show you that one child is slow to warm up, another tires easily, one gets more aggressive outdoors and another clings to a caregiver when unsure. Pushing a child into conformity with a pattern is rarely successful because no child fits an abstract ideal. Real changes take time and comes as a child feels safer and more secure and loved. For example, social-emotional maturation determines when children move from parallel play to cooperative play.

Caregivers can most help children if they avoid being too judgmental and moralistic. Avoid terms like 'good' boy or 'bad' girl. Namecalling, shaming sarcasm, biting and hitting all must be "no-nos" in caring for children. Holding children, giving time-out, redirecting activities, all have their places in setting necessary limits.

Awareness of one's own biases can help a caregiver become more effective. It helps if the adult gets along with children from all racial and ethnic groups, likes both boys and girls, and doesn't have preconceived notions about them being different in play activities or choices of toys.

Adults need to recognize the strain and stress of caring for young children daily. Balance your life accordingly. Healthy habits, enough rest, recreation, adult friends and relationships, and vacation time prevent "burn-out" and insure against lopsided development or stagnation.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE THROUGH APPROPRIATE SCHEDULING, ACTIVITIES AND EQUIPMENT

By Tommie Evans Lee, Supervisor
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Discipline is the process by which one learns to deal positively with self, others and the environment. As a caregiver who works with young children, it is your responsibility to help each child entrusted to your care to learn this process. As each child learns about himself, he is also learning about others and his environment. When a child has a variety of experiences with people and things, the foundation for life is formed.

You, as a caregiver, contribute in major ways to the life of each of the children with whom you work. Your development of a schedule and planning of activities and selection of equipment are some of your major contributions to children.

But first you must know your goals for children. These goals might include:

- developing a positive self image
- learning to like and trust others
- learning to manage feelings
- developing the ability to set standards for personal behavior and to live by those standards
- finding satisfaction and limitations in the field of make believe
- expecting success as well as failures

You are the key to the success of your program. Therefore, you must know some things about yourself. You must think about and decide why you have chosen to be a caregiver of young children. You must determine the meaning of authority and how you will use it. You must be confident. You should be understanding.

After you have thought about yourself and your views of children, there is some information which you must know about child development. What is normal for a two year old? Should he be able to say all of the alphabet and tie his shoes? If he is not developmentally ready to meet such expectations, you are creating problems by expecting such. Know what is normal and, thereby, know what to expect.

Once you have come to grips with yourself and have some knowledge of child development, then you are ready to develop a schedule. This is your regular plan for each day which allows for varying activities and equipment each day. A schedule should teach children that there is a sequence to events and that there are reasons for changes in normal procedure. Your schedule should change as your children change and as you come to know the children with whom you work. If activities are based upon the interests and needs of your children, they will be interesting and challenging to your children.

Upon arrival children should have a choice of activities which allow them to adjust to their environment for the day. Throughout the day, activities for selection should include:

- child selected activities
- adult directed activities
- activities they can do alone or with others

Activities should focus on gross motor development and small muscle development, art, science, math, music, literature, and make believe, both indoors and outdoors.

Your schedule should be consistent. When there are changes, explain the reason to the children. Before you move from one activity to another, give the children verbal notice that they have a few more minutes for their present involvement.

Remember that children learn by doing and, therefore, the more they do, the more they learn. Also, remember that children need basic understandings. The younger the child developmentally, the more simple the activity should be. They also learn by repetition so it's all right to repeat activities.

Finally, the selection of equipment is the key to implementation of the schedule and activities. Your equipment should be of good quality. While this may mean high initial cost, it is an investment. As children are learning about their environment, the equipment will be subject to much use and sometimes abuse by children. High quality equipment will survive years of use by children. Consider moving and garage sales as a possible way of cutting cost, but get only quality equipment. Your equipment should be multi-purpose and should reflect your goals for children.

Discipline is the process by which one learns to deal positively with self, others and the environment. Because you are coming to know yourself as a caregiver and you are learning about child development, you have an evolving knowledge base for developing a schedule, planning activities and selecting equipment. Your program for children will be challenging and interesting.

Group Size in Relation to Program Quality in Child Care Settings

By Patricia F. Hearron, Licensing Consultant
Saginaw County

Because licensing is meant to establish those minimum standards which insure the health and safety of children in care, it does not address the issues of quality care which are above and beyond minimum standards. One such area is group size which can have a surprising impact on the overall quality of a program and centers that wish to do more than meet minimum requirements will take this variable into account.

Many adults have observed that they themselves feel disoriented and confused in crowds. College students complain about the depersonalized treatment they get in large lecture classes. If these situations are jarring to us, think how much more confusing the hustle and bustle of a crowd can be for the young child whose world, only yesterday, was limited to her family and an occasional playmate.

One of the axioms of good preschool education is that it meets children where they are and begins with the familiar before moving on to the exotic. That's the reason for all those September units on "Me, Myself, and I" or "Body Awareness." We assume that the child is most familiar with herself and will, therefore, find it easier to talk about this topic in the strange new world of preschool.

In the same sense, it's wise to gently ease the child into group relationships. We do this by insuring that he doesn't have to become acquainted with too many new people all at once or share the attention of the new adult in his life (teacher) with too many rivals.

Prominent authors in the field of child development recommend a group size of no more than 20 three or four year olds. **In The Nursery School: Human Relationships and Learning,** Katherine Read Baker states, "There will be less than twenty children in any one group, for large groups create strains and reduce the contribution that the school can make to individuals."

In addition, research supports the idea that smaller group size is reflected in a higher quality program. **The National Day Care Study** (1979) found that in **smaller** groups:

- teachers engage in more social interaction with children;
- children displayed more cooperation, verbal initiative and reflective-innovative behavior;
- children showed less hostility and conflict and spent less time wandering or uninvolved with activities;
- children scored higher on the Preschool Inventory and the revised Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

Note that the research does not claim that preschool children cannot be trained to follow directions and function in large groups. It merely suggests that children gain greater benefits when they are allowed to remain in smaller groups.

The next time you find yourself thinking that the children in your center are acting wild lately, consider group size as a possible factor. If you feel that you've been spending all your time and energy moving from crisis to crisis during free play, it could be because there are just too many people to interact productively. The child who wanders aimlessly past all the activities you've set out and can't seem to settle down at group time may have a problem that needs special help, or he may be simply unable to cope with so much stimulation and activity at one time.

In summary, decreasing group size can result in more cooperative, less hostile children, who are "on-task" more often and show greater gains from preschool. As a result, the teachers of these children will be able to spend more time productively involved with them and less time correcting undesirable behavior. This should lead to happier children, happier teachers, and happier parents: a small change with big results.

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Collins, Raymond C., "Child Care and the States: The Comparative Licensing Study", **Young Children** (NAEYC), July, 1983.

Ruopp, R., et. al., **Children at the Center: Summary Findings and Implications. In Final Report of the National Day Care Study,** Cambridge MA; Abt. Associates, 1979.

CHILD CARE WITHOUT SPANKING IS MORE FUN

By Jean Newbern, Licensing Consultant
Lapeer County

Child care without spanking is more fun. Good discipline is control and guidance of behavior in daily living with children by listening, watching, responding, and giving all of one's self. Discipline is not punishment. There are many positive alternatives to directing behavior without spanking.

After thirty-five years of being a parent, twenty years of Child Care Center director and consultant experience and nine years of being a grandmother, I have learned spankings can be replaced as a discipline tool. When I first became a mother, spankings were expected and accepted as a necessary way to discipline. But I have learned by experience to recognize this as a negative and unnecessary part of child care. It is more fun to watch children develop self-esteem and self-control by using positive methods of behavior control. It takes time and understanding, but is exciting to watch the children learn to deal with their own emotions and challenges. They learn to make decisions and to be considerate of others if given the opportunity to practice these skills with guidance. Physical force and spankings are not successful methods in teaching these needed skills.

Children search deeply for clues to the true feelings and actions of adults to help find their own way through life's puzzles. The adult example can simplify behavior patterns for children if they are the right signals. We cannot teach non-violence by hitting. We cannot teach neatness by being careless. The signals we send out are the signals we get back.

Very basic to good discipline is letting the children know the rules. It is important that there be only a few rules. These should be fair, consistent and appropriate to the child's age. If the rules make good sense, children will respect them. Rules must be spoken clearly and simply, and repeated often. Say "the rule is . . . ". Now the rule not the person is the boss.

The adult must know the ages and stages of children. As children grow, their characteristic behavior for a period of time is sometimes in contrast to earlier behavior. Adults who do not recognize the phase a child is in may complicate the child's learning process. The constructive attitude would be to identify the stage and provide the experience and guidance that would help a child successfully move through the stage at a rate suitable to his total development. The adult who is skillful in understanding children will be concerned with the whole child.

Positive methods of discipline mean that you appeal to the child's better nature with love. Let them be helpers. re-direct their aggressive behavior into constructive activities. Communicate approval for correct play. Discuss problems in a reasonable way. Give the child choices of other alternatives, or a thinking time to find a better way. Experience shows that children who receive clear, personal praise behave much better than children who are spoken to only when they misbehave.

Spankings and threats may give temporary results and will release the adult's emotion, but will not teach the child self-control. Once the child learns self-control, discipline is much easier.

Child care without spanking is more fun. Positive methods bring more fun when we hear a child come up with a new idea of his own. It's fun to hear the children help each other remember the rules. It's fun to see them return their toys to the correct place without being reminded. It's exciting to hear a child use words to solve a problem without hitting. Children are not born knowing self-control, and teaching it is an important part of child care in the home or in the center.

BETTER HOMES AND CENTERS

RESOURCES - DISCIPLINE/CHILD MANAGEMENT

Guidance of Young Children, Marian Marion, St. Louis: The C.V. Mosby Co. 1981.

Guiding Young Children, Verna Hildeband (2nd ed.) New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. 1980.

A Guide to Discipline, Jeanette Galambos, N.A.E.Y.C., 1978, 32 pp. $1.50.

Please Don't Sit on the Kids, (Alternatives to punitive punishment) Clare Cherry, 1982. Pitnam Learning. $8.95.

Child Management for Parents, James Eddy, Mott Children's Health Center, Flint, Mi. (DSS Publication 331).

A Guide to Discipline for Family Caregivers, B. Owen, Comm. Coordinated Child Care, Detroit, Mi. 1977.

Mister Rogers Talks with Parents, Fred Rogers and Barry Head, 320 pp., Berkley Publishing, $5.95.

Child Management: A Program for Parents and Teachers, Judith and Donald Smith, 140 pp., 1976, Res Press, $7.95.

How to Discipline With Love, Fitzhugh Dodson, 1978, NAL, $3.95.

Without Spanking or Spoiling: A Practical Approach to Toddler and Preschool Guidance, Elizabeth Crary, 1979, 104 pp. Parenting Press, $6.95.

DON'T SHAKE THE BABY!

Shaking a toddler by the shoulders or giving a child's arm a jerk is an almost universal method of mild punishment regarded as harmless. Not harmless at all, argues Dr. John Caffey of the University of Pittsburgh. Skeletal damage, brain damage, mental retardation and early death are too often the sequels to the whiplash effect produced by such a shaking and the joint wrenching of jerks and grabs. Some injuries of this sort are caused by child-abusers, Dr. Caffey says, but more are innocent actions. "Many well-intentioned, responsible parents think nothing of giving a child a 'good shaking'," he says, "even though the cumulative brain-bruising effect may be grave."

Other innocent actions by parents and older brothers and sisters may also be harmful. Heavy-handed "burping" has been known to cause fatal brain damage. Dr. Caffey also indicts such rough-housing play as tossing babies into the air, "riding the horsie" on a grown-up's shin, "cracking the whip" or somersaulting a tot by grasping his wrists from between his legs . . . Blood vessel damage to the brain or eyes can also result from too springy a baby-bouncer, the action of a powered rocking horse or a jolting ride in a car or on a motorcycle or bike. Dr. Caffey also cites a new possible cause of damage. "Recurrent exposure to the snowmobile probably offers the greatest hazard to infantile brains and hearing", he says. (Dr. Caffey was the first to alert the medical profession to what is now called the "battered child" syndrome - produced by child abuse in an article a quarter-century ago.)

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PROVIDER'S CORNER

The editorial staff has been pleased by the numerous responses to this newsletter's questionnaire. In a later issue will be reported further information from these questionnaires. At this time we would like to publish some of the suggestions you have made on ways you have found to cut costs:

1. Buy food wholesale, take good care of equipment, toys, etc. so they last longer.
2. Become associated with a large business to provide care for employees' children.
3. Garage sales for equipment, making my own toys.
4. Watching for sales on supplies and food.
5. Keeping good records and receipts for tax time; using coupons.
6. Save everything useable.
7. Parents help to supply paper, e.g., computer paper.
8. Cut napkins in half.
9. Involve college students.
10. Planning ahead.
11. Buy paper products in bulk.
12. Be energy minded.
13. Menu planning.
14. Good quality toys; scrap materials.
15. Buy Elmer's glue by the gallon, then put into small containers.
16. Use lending libraries.
17. Trips: take advantage of free movies, also go to parks, gardens, library, where there is no cost.
18. Homemade play-dough.
19. Run a budget, as I do in my home.
20. Using community bulletin boards instead of paying for advertising.
21. Made my own sleeping mats and pillows (for homes).
22. Recycle junk mail.
23. Use generic brands whenever possible.
24. Watching waste.

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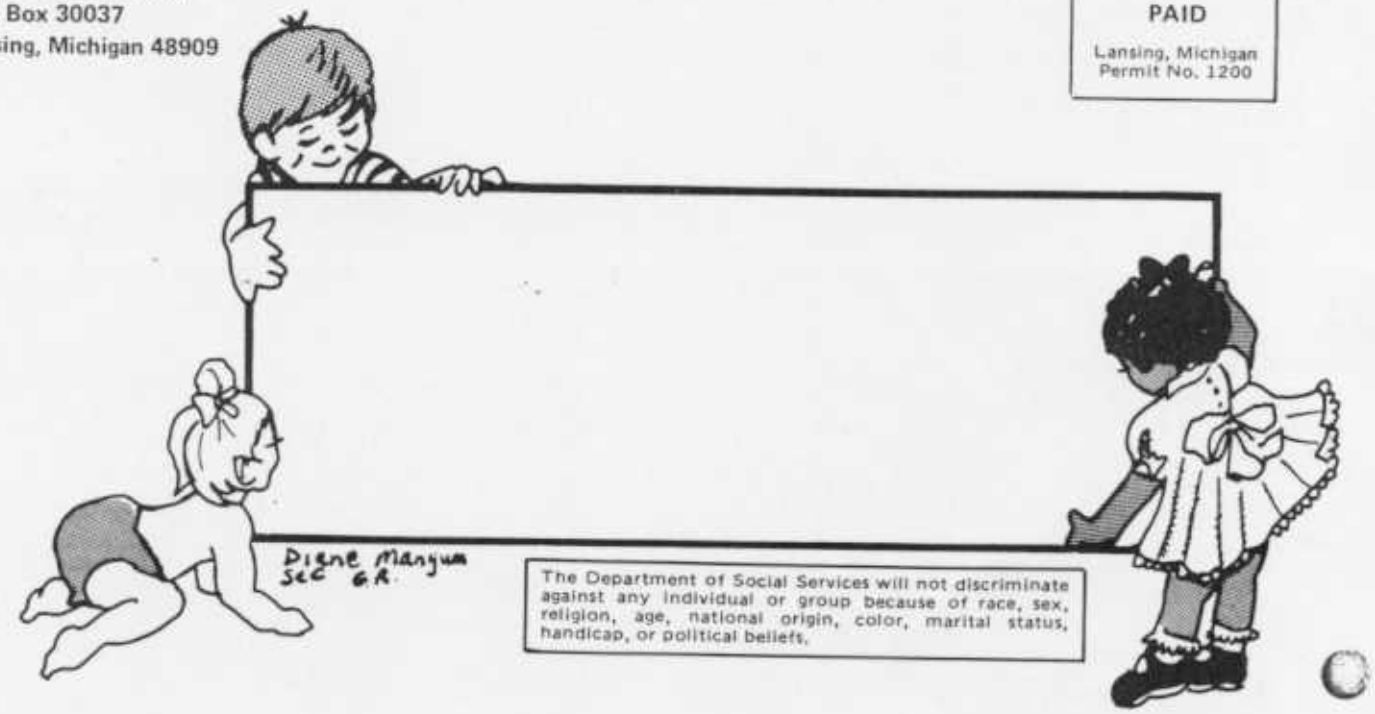

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